

5/6/75

Dear Paul,

Because parts of your letter of the 3rd seem to call for prompt response, I'm risking not remembering to get it mailed when I have to leave in a short while and thus save as much as two days.

And because I always want the uninfluenced recollections of others myself, what will follow is a verbatim transcript of handwritten notes I think I made on the bus returning to Buck and Mary Ferrell's as soon as I left H.L.'s office. I am sure I discussed this with at least Mary. If you do not know her, she is a friend of Sue Fitch. Mary is mad at me because of my anger and disgust and uninhibited expression of both to Arch Kimbrough after he broke a promise he'd made and after it had been costly to me.

I knew from Lonnie that the 60 Minutes people had been to see you. They got onto him through my Whitewash IV and he told them about you.

Let me tell you the contradictory things I know to which I'm not pledged to confidence.

First, I've had no direct contact with the 60 Minutes people except through the special projects librarian who phoned me and then put Harriet Rubin on the line. I have had contact with another in CBS in NYC, but not of 60 minutes. And I have an old friend in the CBS Washington bureau. He was in touch with me about the time 60 Minutes got interested in this subject again, but on behalf of the Cronkite Dept. CBS, too, is a big bureaucracy and there frequently is no internal contact. I did offer to help Ms. Rubin, she thanked me and I've heard nothing since from her. I have heard from a friend not at CBS that this same crew has been in touch with the vermin whose speech at Bishop you told me about through the Martin story. If they are dealing with him I can visualize two possibilities only: they are setting him up, which would be a good indication as to the seriousness of their purposes in one area, if not of what others might consider morals and ethics; or they are still on the nut/sycophant kick represented in their four-part videowhitewash of 1967.

My own best guess is that there are two competing influences: those who really would like to do an honest job now and those who have to live with their pasts. I think it is not impossible that I may have a reading on this soon. I also tell you, at the risk of seeming egocentric, that I tend to have doubts about those who profess serious interest when they are not in touch with me early if only because the most casual research shows that I have done far and away most of the writing and investigating and because of my record in and of suing to end suppressions and of turning up new evidence. When the slightest check within CBS has to turn this up, my position is that I'll wait and see. I surely will help a sincere effort that gives promise of being honest. But my advice to you would be to wait and see, to be sure of what you would be getting into. Remember two things above all: they have to tape more than they ~~xxxx~~ can use, which means they have to edit; and making spectacles of people is considered good entertainment and good TV.

This is not to say that I expect them to edit dishonestly. But normal editing might eliminate what you might consider important. Wallace is one of the best of interviewers, experienced, sharp and quick to detect what he thinks is a discrepancy (which may not be that but may appear to be because he can't know all there is to know about everything).

If you want more advice, I'd have to know more. I gather from Lonnie that their chief interest was in Ruby as an informer. If you can't dictate a complete account and you want me to know more, then the best alternative is to talk it into a tape recorder, which I can then listen to. I do these things that take time while I'm driving so they take less time. Or have a typist transcribe the tape, which would be better if possible because you would then have a record and you may wind up

wanting one. Please excuse this unsolicited advice to one who is both a lawyer and a former agent but lawyers are adversaries and the FBI always wants an angled account, if not a filtered one, whereas your interest and my ability to give you any further advice require honest records.

If your writing is that we discussed long ago and you authorized me to see if I could make proper arrangements, I would encourage you to be careful. I am not the person to do that writing and one of the conditions of success is to get the right one. I have never forgotten this and I have never found the one you need. I now have several contacts that could supply the right solution. If it is on this then as the first step I would recommend that you make the most detailed notes possible or if you haven't go over them and expand on them, adding whatever else you can remember. If I could ever get down there for a while a good way would be to just talk it ~~out~~ onto tape. How that story is handled is one of the key factors in its potential and it is important not to begin with one who has an angled preconception. The potential, I have always felt, is enormous but it can be ruined very easily and the manner of handling is one of these ways. Be careful!

I am out of contact with the current legal situation. I met Jerry Fatchen one time and have not heard from him since. That was in October, which in terms of that situation can be out-of-date. I'm not prying, but I am raising the several questions his name should raise. I don't know if you two are opponents or on the same side now.

On my writing: I began in high school, when my paper won All American honors at the Columbia School of Journalism annual competition, probably about 1929. Thereafter I wrote for the (Dupont) Wilmington Morning News and was a by-line writer for the old Philadelphia Ledger syndicate, the fore-runner of today's Sunday supplements. After a stint as a Senate investigator and editor I became a magazine writer, Washington correspondent for what was then the third largest picture magazine, Annenberg's "Click" and also free-lanced until I went into the Army and OSS in World War II. One of my writing specialties was "azi cartoons. This work was followed by government action against corporations and attracted much attention at the time. Corporations were fined and vested, etc. After a period of radio reporting I got disgusted with it all and became a farmer. When the farming was ruined by military aviation I returned to writing, had a handshake deal on two books but when JFK was assassinated ~~in~~ and I had all those doubts I devoted myself to it. I have published, myself and ~~xxx~~ commercially, six well-known books. I am the publisher of the Whitewash series, the first underground books. The first of these was a best-seller in the underground and reprint format. The first cell reprint was for a quarter of a million copies. Frame-Up and what I did with it provided James Earl Ray his first defense.

You say "Mike Douglas show." You mean Mike Wallace, or 60 Minutes.

Now I'm going to type those handwritten notes cold. If I remember more I'll add it afterward:

Fri 12/3/71- Saw RLB 3:15-3:35 in his corner office. He asked me to write columns for him, saying "We pay for them" and after a pause "if we use them." He gave me a set of his books through a secretary temporarily replacing his regular one & telling her to "put them in a bag." She returned with the books and what he had described as "high powered stuff," and with two brown envelopes. This triggered one or two demonstrations of displeasure in which he said "the bag is very important." It turned out to be a plastic bag advertising "Life Line" on one side and his cosmetics on the other. I was then leaving and I said I hoped I had not taken too much of his time, to which he responded that his time was not worth anything. I responded with a comment about how much use he had out of it to and he flared up a little by saying that "nobody gets into my office unless I want to see them." His voice is very weak, he seems to lose himself in the middle of a thought, but in most cases, after a pause, he picked each up.

He read me something he had written about Kissinger & said he had to change it to put in his age at the time he came to the US (15) instead of only the date ~~and~~ & the years he spent at Harvard (15). The way it is typed (I was supplied with many copies, it is hard to see how he could have made more complete use of so tiny a slip of paper.

He told me about how PR is a crook who was in cahoots with his food people, that he had stolen a little & had made possible their theft of millions.

He insisted I call PR then and there & ask for either "FA" or a copy, in his presence, in the room with a bed & therapeutic equipment.

This is the end of the notes which I have just read for the first time.

I remember more. Including about the room; where HL sat; how he looked; how short his socks seemed to be and how pale his legs; how he seemed almost to drool in his speech hesitancy; and what may appear to be oddly, that he appeared to be reluctant to call you a crook.

His was a corner office, I think past where yours ~~was~~ had been and I'm pretty certain to the left of the reception desk at the end of the corridor away from the way the receptionist sat. He sat in the corner. One time I took pictures, I don't recall if then and from his office, of the Dallas skyline. Digging them out would probably give the date.

The bed was sort of a hospital-type bed, as I now recall brown metal. It was through a door diagonally opposite his chair. I remember it as a rather high bed, with the phone on the left of it as one entered and a bit awkward to use. You may remember that I did phone you from there. It is probably the next day that we had a drink at the Texas Club. You picked me up at Parkland.

I still have the books he gave me. I am not sure whether I still have that special plastic bag. He gave the secretary what I presume for him was a rough time over it. I don't know if I still have any of his sheets of propaganda because I went from Dallas to Stevens Point, Wisc., to make a speech at the college. Some of the kids with me, they had a dinner arranged for me, they say this stuff, and they may have grabbed it all up. If I have any left it will be with the books.

I sat as we talked on his left, facing him, my right side toward one window, my back toward the entrance. I am sure he said more about what he called the theft and your alleged part in it and probably something about how much more this meant to him because of something like a special trust he had in you. I'm the sense of both because of your job and as compared with the others. I am pretty sure he said something about giving you what I think he described as a small settlement without any indication of the contradiction between calling you a crook and then paying you. It may have been in the sense of rather than going to court, but it was not in the sense that you were other than a crook. (I don't know what the settlement was because I never asked you and you never told me.)

I have a clear enough recollection of our pleasant time at the club and I am sure I made a few notes on what you told me then. I am also sure that at that time, while there may not have been any reason for including it in those notes, that I have you a fuller account than the foregoing of what HE said.

If you show this to a lawyer, the "FA" is a reference to Farewell America, a spoof book which could not be more libellous and of him. I had had an invitation from you to look you up in Dallas and at the Hunt office, relayed through a Fort Worth advertising man named Jack White, who had on his own encouraged Hunt to hire me as a ghost. I did not accept this invitation until some time later, when I had a complete copy of this manuscript, single spaced on legal-sized paper. Because it was clearly a department of disinformation operation I phoned you from New Orleans. You told me that you'd have a ticket waiting for me at the Delta booth at Moisant, to phone you when I'd booked a flight and that either you'd meet me or someone would, and to wait at the statue of the Texas Ranger at Love field. You also offered me accommodations.

However, I did not want to appear as a mendicant and I was able to be of help to a British reporter, John Pilger and was able to stay in the same hotel room with his photographer, who was a friend of mine, so I did not accept this offer. I did stay with my friend in the Statler, on which I can also add details, if they are irrelevant to your purpose.

So on that occasion left your office together and went to the exit from the parking lot. You then introduced me to a man who was then leaving. I believe his name is John Carrington.

My purposes in going into these seeming irrelevancies is to give you and your lawyer a basis for checking my recollection, even now when I am recovering from two serious illnesses (pneumonia and pleurisy) and after all this time and when I had no special reasons for recalling what you've asked me about. I can give you details of what happened when I left Dallas on both of the occasions to which I've referred, what happened when I left Dallas, what happened when my luggage went astray or was intercepted - even the clothing I got to tide me over because of this. (I also had a minor accident in turning in Pilger's rental car at Love Field. I think it was "National and I know I changed my flight there. If it is a question of my ability to recall, especially the time Hunt called you a crook, I can give you the most elaborate details even of my leaving Dallas and what then followed, who took me to the airport (Buck Ferrell, in the rain, and I have the picture I took of him for my wife), the weather on that flight and on the connecting flight in Chicago and means of confirming it, the luggage I was using (I threw a Lake Central identification sticker away just the other day after it came loose on the same bag I was then using, a "Lark.") I have a very clear recollection of even the return flight, landing at National, and the weather, and I can describe the kind of sweater the stewardess was knitting for her boyfriend and the conditions as we landed (she sat next to me and laid her knitting down and just prayed. We saw no land from takeoff until we were almost at touchdown and directly over the runway, the first thing I saw. I am sure that records will confirm the weather and the flight and the stitch was the most open I have ever seen knitted - and my wife knits much.)

Probably the students have gone on, but there remains a professor at that college (history) who became my friend. I'm sure he'll remember the reaction to Hunt's propaganda by the students because Ann, his wife were also guests at this little party in a house a bunch of mess aids had rented out in the country. They used old cable reels for tables and cocktail tables. The professor's name is David Wrons.

I am confident I can tell you where we sat in the Texas Club, how we went when we entered it and then in which direction we went (to the left, twice) and what I drank (JoB and water, I think two if you have bills). We sat at a relatively low table, not a regular table. More like a household cocktail table.

By the way, I never did get that ms copy of Farewell America back. (My only interest is archival.) It was when I asked him for a copy if it that he insisted I call you and insisted that it be from that particular phone and no other. Did it have three buttons? I'm not sure. I think it was on a brown table that was not wide. He never said why he wanted me to call you but he sure was insistent. The impression I have is that he was saying you were worse because he trusted you more than the others.

I've gone into these extra details to provide a means of authenticating my recollections. and I'll bet I can recognize a picture of the receptionist.

I've run out of time, so my ~~own~~ apologies for the typos. I have a carbon if any are unclear.

Best,

Harold Weisberg